

Report on:

**Deleuze Beyond Badiou:
Ontology, Multiplicity and Event**
Clayton Crockett

Reader: Dr Mike Grimshaw, Canterbury University, New Zealand.

This text is a timely and fascinating, provocative and potentially highly influential revision of Badiou's engagement and critique of Deleuze. There has been a notable upsurge in interest in Deleuze in recent years, yet this is tempered by the attendant upsurge in Badiou-related work. Linked to this is a renewed interest in continental political philosophy and a neo-Marxist turn. Badiou's long-standing and forceful rejection of Deleuze, especially of Deleuze in the realm of political thought has had a strong impact on the reception and reading of Deleuze for many scholars. Yet Crockett is prepared to challenge this Badiouian reading and reception, arguing for a reassessment of Deleuze, against Badiou's dismissal, as a political thinker of critical importance. Crockett forcefully, and perceptively illuminates the mis-readings in Badiou's approach to Deleuze and provides a text that will be widely discussed, not only amongst scholars of Badiou and Deleuze. The market for this book will be both academics and graduate students in Philosophy, Politics and Religion- and the associated disciplines within liberal arts. It is also the type of book that university libraries will order given the upsurge in Deleuzean studies. Yet this is more than just a corrective re-reading of Badiou and Deleuze. Crockett is a thinker who is quickly developing an influential international profile in his own right and this text reinforces why. For having undertaken the reading of the Badiou-Deleuze debate, Crockett embarks on a magisterial development of a political philosophy of energy and societal change. This is an interdisciplinary text of rare ability and power that takes the reader into not only a deeply considered discussion of two crucial thinkers but carefully and skilfully explains the limits and possibilities in their discussion. In itself this is a compelling reason for the publication of this text. For both students and scholars would benefit greatly from Crockett's fascinating and well-argued re-evaluation. However Crockett then demonstrates how such a reading of Deleuze as has been employed opens up the possibility for

new thought in and of itself. The excitement of these latter chapters culminates in an explicit political philosophy/theology of Voudou that strikes a magnificent call against the prevailing hegemonic neo-liberalism.

The text begins with a clear, perceptive and well-thought-out introduction that creates interest in the reader. Crockett expresses and demonstrates his commendable ability to explain complex ideas in ways that are made accessible yet do not lose their subtlety.

This is a text that is as much a work of a skilled teacher as it is of an excellent scholar and thinker. This means the text will be able to reach and influence a wide audience. I do feel however that at p.3 there is a need to expand the examples of totalitarianism. At the moment they are too reductive, for fascism is more than Nazism, and Communism is more than just Stalinism. Communism in particular needs to include Maoism- especially given the latter's influence in Continental thought

I also feel that at p.6 end of paragraph 1, the author needs to explain briefly why he not going to engage with the figures Deleuze writes about; for at the moment, as expressed, this only raises the question of why not?

As Chapter Two posits- the strength of this text and re-reading is that it is from a disciplinary outsider and so is an inter- and multi-disciplinary reading in its offerings and potential. This strengthens the text in that its readership will not just be limited to continental thought or its sub-readings in Badiouian and Deleuzian scholarship. Rather its readership potentially encompasses continental thought, politics, wider liberal arts and religion

Chapter Two is a thoughtful and clear refutation of Badiou's (mis)reading of Deleuze. This carefully, convincingly and even-handedly sets out the issues to be addressed. The argument and chapter is strengthened into the wider debates of continental thought by the discussion of Žižek's intervention. Žižek is notoriously difficult to coherently and consistently introduce as a 3rd-party into any debates such is the range and intensity of his polymathic thought. Yet here Crockett

demonstrates his skill in handling such an intervention by Žižek intelligently- and most importantly regarding Žižek- intelligibly.

Having set out the terms of the debate and its need to re-read as claimed, in Chapter Three Crockett makes an important correction to misreadings of Deleuze and in this makes a major contribution toward a wider, accessible reading and understanding of Deleuze. Deleuze is very much in need of such skilled and intelligible readers as Crockett, especially in his ability to make Deleuzian ideas and statements accessible yet still illuminating when translated into English.

The re-reading continues in Chapter Four and here an important addition is the introduction of the work of Catherine Malabou. This takes the text into a wider discussion and extends the Deleuzian debate into a new series of conversations with one of the most important and exciting of recent scholars.

In Chapter Five, Crockett undertakes an important re-reading and discussion of Deleuze's *Cinema 2*. This is another important contribution for this text by Deleuze is in need of such a consistent, accessible and thoughtful engagement. As such this is part of the need to publish this text. Too often the engagement with continental thought verges on the Gnostic and in doing so just underscores the false claims of those wishing to undertake a Sokal-type rejection. Yet I would argue that the problem is not Continental thought but rather those who have sought to remake it and restate it as a type of 'difficulty for the elite', in short what could be termed a hip-gnosis. Deleuze- and *Cinema 2* in particular- has tended to suffer from such unwelcome attentions that have made it difficult to argue against such rejections as stated clearly and forcibly by Badiou and his supporters. Yet Crockett, who is as he notes, not an anti-Badiouian in himself, is able to carefully and clearly transcend such limitations and he makes Deleuze and *Cinema 2* both accessible and meaningful.

Chapter Six begins with a forceful reiteration of why Crockett is engaging with Deleuze primarily via Badiou. Yet this is not a dialectical encounter but rather the creation of what can be termed a post-Deleuzian position; for there is the staking out a compelling case for his own taking-forward of Deleuze and likewise

his counter-reading of Badiou. This is a masterful chapter and a major contribution in its own right that continues in Chapter Seven with Crockett's expanded counter-reading of Badiou.

The text then shifts into a more explicitly post-Deleuzean politics from here on and this and the following Chapters could be signalled as a 'Part Two' of the text. For in Chapter 8 Crockett makes his own distinctive contribution more explicit with the introduction of an a-thermal magnetoelectrodynamics that shifts directly into what can be seen as a radical possibility-necessity of a revised nuclear energy production and usage. While such an explicit politics has been building throughout the text, I do feel that a breaking of the book into distinct sections would help a wider readership. Related to this, one change I would recommend is that the text would benefit from addition of subheadings throughout each chapter. For given the depth and focus of the discussions, subheadings will help the reader by signalling the important steps in the arguments being developed. In turn this would help in the accessibility of the text and enable it to be made use of in a wider series of academic readings and strengthen its use as a teaching text.

As it currently stands, the text culminates in Chapter Nine with what can termed a revisionist recovery of Deleuzean politics wherein Crockett's manifesto for a Deleuzean-derived change is expressed with true revolutionary intent and conviction.

The Deleuzean politics of Chapters 1-7 now becomes re-imagined as a post-Deleuzean manifesto and in this convincingly, coherently and most crucially, excitingly acts as a rejection and rebuke of Badiou's dismissal of Deleuze for lacking political impact and focus. For the problem is exposed as two-fold: Badiou's misreading of Deleuze, but also the political blindness of much Deleuzean scholarship that has, implicitly -if unwittingly- supported Badiou's claim of the non-political Deleuze. The chapters that comprise what I would relabel Part Two make a major- and what will be highly debated and engaged with - contribution to Deleuzean scholarship. Yet they also lay down an important challenge to Badiou and his supporters to rethink Deleuze afresh. As such this will not be a book that generates universal approval, but it will be a

book that will need to be read and engaged with and as such provides an exciting shift in continental thought. I can easily envisage this text becoming the subject of panel debates at conferences.

The text concludes with a passionate discussion of Haiti wherein the politics of Deleuze and Crockett coincide with the real-world experience of the missing people. Here is where the mis-guided reversions to 1968 that have trapped leftist, radical politics within a meta-politics of neo-liberal capitalism are exposed for the provincial arguments they exist as. The missing people are, in the end, only missing, because we in the worlds of privilege are trapped in a type of reactionary student politics of self-heroics and self-interest. While this chapter is labelled an appendix, I think it needs a relabelling as a type of praxis application of post-Deleuzean political thought. The term appendix makes it too easy to mis-read (and potentially dismiss) it as an add-on chapter. Yet I would argue that this is where the role of Deleuzean-inspired politics becomes explicit. In conclusion, this is an important text in two distinct ways. Firstly it demands our reconsideration of Deleuze as a political thinker. Secondly it confirms Crockett as a most important emergent thinker in the world of political continental thought. For Crockett is not only an interpreter, he is ever-increasingly an important figure and thinker in his own right.

I am aware that it could appear that this is a very one-sided review. Yet I must state that before I read this text I was more inclined to side with Badiou's reading of Deleuze and politics. This book has forced a revision of my own reading and thinking on both Deleuze and Badiou for it is a text that will both challenge and excite its readers. As a reader this is the type of text we look for. I unreservedly and most strongly recommend its publication.

Minor changes suggested:

p.4 line 7 "and affirmation" should be "an affirmation"

p.5: para 2 , sentence two, should begin "Badiou claims..."- will make it easier to follow Badiou's claims re Deleuze

p.27 line 11- use of 'vitality' is unfortunate considering earlier statement re vitalism

p.38 paragraph2 line 11 replace “how” with ‘who’

pp. 64-65

Would be useful (if possible) to provide a footnote discussion/information on Joe Bousquet